

Transcript: How to Support Fat Clients with Body Image Concerns

Vincci: Perfect. Well, welcome everyone, to our Webinar today, and also happy International Women's Day. I am so excited to be welcoming Vinny Welsby from Fierce Fatty to chat with us on How to Support Fat Clients with Body Image Concerns. In case you don't know me, my name is Vincci Tsui. I am the founder of Weight Inclusive Dietitians in Canada. And just some quick I guess housekeeping stuff. So, you should've all been muted when you entered into the meeting, so if you could just please leave yourself on mute, that would be greatly appreciated. If you do have any questions over the course of the presentation, feel free to put them in the chat box and I will be moderating that throughout the presentation, or I guess will be reading the questions at the end of the presentation, sorry.

Note from Vincci: I want to acknowledge and apologise for my insensitivity in stating that I was making a "quick" land acknowledgement at the start of the presentation. It was not appropriate for me to imply that the land acknowledgement was unimportant. This does not reflect my attitude toward Truth & Reconciliation, and I hope that my comment does not take away from the importance of this work, and from the presentation.

And then just a quick land acknowledgment. So I want to acknowledge that most if not all of us are gathered here today as settlers on the traditional territories of a number of Indigenous peoples and First Nations. I personally am speaking to you today from Treaty 7 territory, which are the traditional lands of the Niitsitapi, or Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuu T'ina peoples, and the Iyahe Nakoda. As dietitians, knowing our profession's direct connection with the harms that were perpetrated in the residential school system, I truly believe that we need to play a role in the Truth and Reconciliation, and I hope that doing land acknowledgments like this can be one small step towards that path.



And I wanted to just do a quick introduction of our speaker today. So, Vinny Welsby, their pronouns are they/them, is a world leading expert on dismantling fatphobia and diet culture, TedX speaker, and best selling author. They went from being homeless, abused, a self esteem that was aching low, into the courageous fat activist and changemaker they are today. Vinny helps people fall in love with themselves and is dedicated to shifting the way society views fat bodies. So I will let you take it away, Vinny.

Vinny: Thank you so much, Vincci! So excited to be here, everyone. Just a little bit on the format of the presentation. We're gonna have 45 minutes of me talking. If you have questions throughout the presentation, feel free to put them in the chat box, and at the end, we'll have 15 minutes where I can answer the questions, [inaudible 00:02:38.7] questions first, and if Vincci thinks they're the most relevant, we'll get to those first. So, are we ready? Are we ready to go? Put in the chat box, so I can see that you're there and ready to go with this presentation on How to Support Fat Clients with Body Image Concerns. Alright! Okay, let's do it!

Vincci Tsui to Everyone in the chat: Just so everyone knows, a copy of the slides will be provided along with the recording of the presentation

Vinny: Okay, so my name is Vinny Welsby, pronouns they/them. I am a smelly Brit living in Canada, and when I'm not changing the way that people feel about their bodies, you can find me listening to true crime podcasts and watching dog rescue videos on YouTube. Anyone else do the same? Anyone else? Or pimple popping videos on YouTube. I know I'm disgusting, I'm sorry. I'm also the founder of Fierce Fatty, Fat Activist, TedX speaker, Best Selling Author. And a land acknowledgement. I live in Vancouver, which is the traditional ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, the Musqueam Nation, and the Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

So, let's go to the outcomes of this training today. And first we're gonna look at why fatphobia can derail work with food, mistakes to avoid, and what to do instead, what determines body image, the four aspects of body image, how to support clients who are struggling with body image, and a case study, and finally we've got that 15 minute Q&A at the end.



So before we start, I want to make an important note here on intersections. Today, we're focussing on the experience of fatness and body image, however, it's important to recognise that anti-fatness does not exist in a vacuum, and it's spawned from and is inextricably linked to racism, as well as healthism, ableism, and other systems of oppression. Anti-fatness is anti-Blackness. So rarely is a person who struggles with fatphobia without a) holding other intersections themselves, and b) bias of their own, due to privilege. And because of this, focussing on body image concerns with the lens of intersectionality is essential.

And an example of this is me, personally struggling with my own transphobia on the way to discovering my nonbinary identity. So, my own fatphobia, anti-fatness, anti-Blackness was so deeply tied in with transphobia, because that was my true identity was of a trans, nonbinary person. And so that's how that type of stuff can manifest. And so, you know, we're focussing on fatness today, but it's just completely linked with so many different systems of oppression, so I just want to make that note.

Okay. So, let's get into why fatphobia can derail work with food. And I would love it if you put in the comments if you recognise any of these sentiments or thoughts that your clients might have. So, tell me or give me a yes in the comments if you recognise any of these. Clients say:

- I'll physically allow myself this, but I know it'll make me fat, so I feel anxious doing it.
- I should slow down on allowing myself everything I want, because I notice that my pants are getting tight, or if you're a Brit like me: trousers.
- I hope intuitive eating will make me thin.
- My set point weight is probably less than this, fingers crossed!

And finally:

- What if I just keep getting bigger and bigger and never stop eating?

Yeah, Sydney says, "almost every single client". Yeah. and so this is really important to recognise, that this is fatphobia, right? And this is gonna really derail work with food, and so this is why. So, if we ignore body image concerns with clients, this is what the outcome is likely gonna be. So, they're gonna be unlearning diet culture,



learning intuitive eating. Clients hate their body, they have tonnes of fatphobic beliefs, and they may allow food physically, but not mentally, and so, you know, that allowing it physically is the stuff that we saw on the previous slide, but not mentally. And because of that, they are able to feel at peace with food. But if we address body image concerns with clients, they will start unlearning diet culture, learning intuitive eating, and simultaneously working on dismantling their fatphobia and feeling neutral with their body, and then they'll be able to begin to allow food physically and mentally, and because of that, working towards truly feeling at peace with food. And so for me, these are really, they go hand in hand, and if we don't also address body image concerns, clients are gonna really struggle with feeling at peace with food.

Okay. So I wanna share some key mistakes to avoid in this whole process, to make sure that we're not doing these types of things: So, if you don't have current, lived experience, saying "I totally get it. Being fat is hard". So I ask people...I've done various polls, and obviously I speak to my clients, and I say like, what is really difficult about this, in regards to dealing with someone who doesn't have lived experience of being in a bigger body? And they said that people trying to empathise with them, and really they don't get it, the better thing is just to say "I don't get it", you know, "it's not my experience. Simplifying the issues without recognising your privilege. So "just love yourself, I did it!" And so, simplifying the issue if you live in a smaller body, "just love yourself!" is obviously a lot easier if you have a normative body, if you have a body which is accepted by society, versus if you have any other type of marginalisation.

Next is talking about why dieting is bad/accepting your body is good, and not the many reasons why for fat folks, dieting may be the only thing available to keep them safe and being smaller will protect them from bigotry. So, you know, the idea of losing weight is not gonna help you with your confidence. You know, it's more nuanced than that, you know. Losing weight will help someone in regards to being less stigmatised and marginalised in society. So, it probably will – now we all know that there's no way to really lose weight, but – honouring those feelings of dieting is probably something to keep fat people safe. If we're saying that we know that we are quote "bad", and we're dieting, and we're trying to lose weight, it's safer for us, right? And so, recognising that, versus not.



Next is using your body as a business card and not having representation of fat, diverse bodies in your work. And I know that's a big thing in like, in the dietary world of "your body's a business card", and we really need to get away from that.

Next, not understanding about fat politics and not talking about it in your work, and why doing this work is way harder for fat folks. And so we need to be talking about this, and not worrying about scaring off people with, you know, quote "radical views", because it should be a cornerstone of what you're doing.

Seeing collaboration with fat providers and educators as something you need to do in the future. Like, maybe I'll get around to it, versus it being an urgent need. And finally, valuing the comfort of thin clients over the safety of fat clients, especially in group settings. So I see this in regards to, say, Facebook groups. Not having rules, not having boundaries around language and posts and group norms. And so a lot of times, say if you have a mix of clients in a group program, some are fat, some are thin, a lot of times thin clients will say, come in a post in a Facebook group of "oh, I'm so ugly, look at my body, I'm so disgusting", blah, blah, blah, and post pictures of their bodies, maybe even just celebrating their body, and using the 'O' word, and doing all sort of types of things, and so it makes the space really unsafe for fat people.

So this is what we wanna do instead! Tell fat clients that you don't know what it's like for them, if you don't; if you don't share the same identities, then we just don't know, right? Something like? "I have no way of knowing what that is like. I can't even imagine how tough it is". Something as simple as that.

Recognise and talk about the harms of fatphobia and why it's harder for fat folks versus straight sized people. Refer to fat people, the fat community, fat spaces, and if they have other marginalised identities, those as well.

Rally against the system of fatphobia, which is, you know, exactly what we're doing today, just by being here. Talk about fat politics in your work, hire fat people, use images of fat folks or no bodies at all, and finally, set clear boundaries in group settings to protect the most marginalised.



Okay, so just a quick and dirty of do's and don'ts there.

Okay so let's move into what determines body image. Okay, so many things determine body image, and determines how someone views themselves, but let us look at these five main categories. So let's do a little bit of imagining. We've got a body image cup. And so our body image, there we go...we're gonna pour some stuff into it. So first off, we're gonna be pouring in 'identity'. Okay, what determines body image. So first off, we have identity, so that is your age, gender, race, culture, etcetera. So, who they are and perceive themselves to be.

Next, we're going to be adding in some mental health. So mental health, the ability to deal with stresses, the amount of support they have, resiliency, you know, that's going into the body image cup. Next we have body changes. So things like giving birth, gaining or losing weight, becoming disabled, ageing, etcetera, etcetera. Next, we have actual body. So, actual and perceived body, and how much society accepts or rejects those attributes. And finally, we have interactions with the world. So interpersonal, institutional and ideological. I'm going to go into those "I"s in a second, but it can include traumatic events or positive reinforcement.

Now, when we think about that, we need to recognize that fat people have to live in a world where the vast majority of people agree with their assessment that their body is wrong. Therefore, these areas can be the biggest influences. And so a straight sized person, as you know, is dealing with all these different complicated things. But, you know, as a fat person, we can't turn to the world and say, "is it true that my body is awful?" and get reassurance, because the world will say, "yes, yes, it's true, you should lose weight". And so this is what it can look like. Like the cup runneth over with stuff that we need to deal with issues because we can't get that reassurance from the world that our body is okay. In fact, the absolute opposite. So it's really important to recognize that.

So, why, it's different for fat folks. So I'm going to talk about the levels of fatphobia here. Now if we start at the top, this is inspired by the 4 I's of oppression, and if we start at the top, our interaction with the world is when we start with interpersonal or internalised fatphobia. So the beliefs that you hold about fatness, and how you perceive yourself due to those beliefs. And so every day, we have beliefs we hold



about ourselves and measuring ourselves against these fatphobic attitudes, and so if you're a fat person those internalised messages are going to be like, "my body is not good enough". And so if you're straight sized, you're going to be holding internalised privilege.

Next we move down to Interpersonal. And so interpersonal, the beliefs that other people hold about fatness, and how they treat you due to those beliefs. And so these 2 are kind of like the surface level stuff we see everyday, and we can recognise, of: oh yeah, fat people, this is what they experience. If we go below the surface we can recognize that we have institutional fatphobia. So institutional fatphobia is the belief society holds about fatness, and how it treats others due to those beliefs. And over the side here we've got examples of what that can look like. And so what that looks like with institutional fatphobia is: medical, fatphobia, job discrimination, education, lack of access to resources, sense of community belonging and finally, ideological fatphobia. So the idea that fat people are inferior, ethically, morally inferior, and don't deserve dignity and respect. So it's a social culture. and political belief. So, you know, the idea of everybody knows that fat people are unhealthy, lazy, unattractive, and should just lose weight.

So when we understand that we have all of these different layers of fatphobia...and so when, you know, you're sharing on Instagram and someone says "skinny shaming is the same as fat shaming". Has anyone experienced that? You know, people coming on their Instagram and saying, you know, "thin people have it just as bad", and "we shouldn't be shaming anyone". Then we can go to resources like this and say this hey, this is why it's different for people who have bigger bodies. It's, you know, all of these different ways that we're experiencing fatphobia.

Okay, So let's move to the 4 aspects of body image. Okay. So, the 4 aspects of body image. So first, perceptual body image. So how you see yourself; your self perception. And that's not always accurate, you know? And so you could look at yourself in the mirror and say, Oh, I look really unattractive, but the reality might be actually you're you're an attractive person, or it could be accurate right? Next, we have affective body image. So how you feel about your body, so are you happy or sad about it; how satisfied or dissatisfied you feel. Next we have cognitive body image. So, how you think about your body. And this can mean that you are



preoccupied with thoughts of your body. And finally we've got behavioural body image so how you behave due to body image. So behaviours like dieting, isolating, hiding your body; things like that.

Now we've got those 2 concepts. What determines body image and the 4 aspects of body image – and we've got these 2 concepts – and so if we hold them both, and I'm going to go into what we can do with how we can support both of these different concepts, and then go in a little bit deeper on practical things that we can do. Okay?

So if we think about what influences body image, how can we support in these areas? And some of these areas are pretty pretty big and so all of these areas, especially mental health and identity, depending on someone's distress around this topic, referring them to therapy. I mean I'm a huge, you know, I think if if someone has the ability to go to therapy, referring to them to therapy, especially if you see that this is really something that's very very, you know, sticky for them, very powerful; getting that help from someone who's a professional in this area is great.

One thing to note, though, is often – it's really really annoying – often, clients will come to me and say "I went to therapy, and the therapist was fatphobic", and the therapist is like, "Oh, you're struggling with, you know, your body and liking your body? Well, perhaps you should lose weight". So I know it's difficult because we have clients all over the place, but if you have any resources locally where you know someone is not fatphobic, that's great, but, you know also saying to clients, "By the way, just keep your eyes out for things that say that say they might be fatphobic". Yeah, yeah, totally. So harmful. (In the chat). Yeah, which is, unfortunately, you know, we will refer out to someone and hope that they, you know, provide help, and they'd do the opposite.

So with body changes and actual body, this can be supported by offering evidence and different perspective. Now, now, I'll go into that a little bit more about what that looks like, but body changes and actual body, we can offer evidence and different perspectives. Now, interactions with the world, this is where we can refer to fat educators and the fat community. Okay?

So let's move to these...these here will be the 4 different aspects. So with perceptual body image. we want to change their perception. And the way that we change their



perception of who they are is education and exposure to diverse bodies again. I'm gonna go in a little bit deeper on this stuff as well.

Okay, effective body image. So, focusing on function over looks. So, you know, focusing on what a body can do versus what it looks like, which, there's limitations to that, because if the person is disabled or chronically ill, then that might not be helpful. Also here, support from a fat educator or provider. Next, cognitive. So identifying and breaking down beliefs, self-care, therapy boundaries. And finally behavioural. So here this would be goal setting and small steps. And goal setting is going to help with all of these other aspects as well.

Okay, So let's overview of what we just spoke about. so we can get that kind of more solidified in our brain. Overview on what we just spoke about: refer to therapy, identify their beliefs and provide a different perspective and evidence, provide education on HAES, intuitive eating, fat liberation, racism, any other marginalisations that they're dealing with; even if they're not, they need to know about that stuff. Making sure that their brain is soaked in fat positive goodness. So, social media, other media, friends, family, boundary setting. Offer the idea of valuing their body for what it does not of what it looks like. So studies show that that's really helpful, but also embrace the idea that this might not be helpful for disabled or chronically ill folks. Identify what they are doing without what they're not doing due to how they perceive their body and what they would like to do. So, I'm not doing x, y, z, because I don't like my body. Okay well, what would you like to do? Do you want to go riding a bike? Do you want to go to the beach? Do you, you know, what are you not doing, and what small steps can we take to help you get there? Finally, refer to fat educators and the fat community.

Okay, so I want to dig in a little deeper on identifying their beliefs and providing a different perspective and evidence. So, now, I like to think about beliefs like we're all carrying around these suitcases. These suitcases are our beliefs, and inside the suitcases are the evidence that we have collected individually to support the beliefs that we hold. So imagine we've got 2 people. Person 1 has the belief that fat is bad. Person 2 also has a belief that fat is bad. But when we open the suitcase, we open Person 1's suitcase, we notice that their evidence – what they've got inside – is: one time they took a health class, and it said that fat is unhealthy. Now I mean, it's really



unlikely that we're gonna meet someone who has only had one exposure to fatphobic rhetoric. That's, you know...they're gonna be living on an island somewhere, right? So normally it's gonna be filled. But this is, you know, this is an example. And so Person 2, theirs is just jam-packed with stuff. So they grew up in a fatphobic family. They dieted as a teen, they binge watch The Biggest Loser, for, you know all of the seasons. Hello, that was me. Lots of diets as an adult, etc. etc. etc. So that is jam-packed full.

So what we want to do is open their suitcases and start examining the contents and seeing if we can offer different perspectives. And when I say different perspectives, it's so that they have more information. And I want to use this example of this picture of a dog. So tell me in the comments, what do we know about this dog? Now, the sun is shining from behind the dog, and we've kind of got information about this dog. So tell me in the comments, what do we know about this dog just from this image? So can we tell the breed of the dog? Can we tell? Yeah, Meredith said it's wet and sandy. Yeah, fluffy. Yeah, I know nothing about dogs. Yeah, dog looks fluffy, Husky-like, yeah. Can't tell if they're sad or playing. Yep. Yeah, so we've got a certain amount of information about this dog. We can tell it's fluffy, it looks like it's dirty, it looks like maybe it's playing, maybe it's sad, maybe it's small..ish? Or maybe not/ Maybe it's big - I don't know.

But the reason why we can tell certain amounts of things is we've got one perspective. This camera angle shows a certain amount of things. And so that's what it's like for our clients who have had this one perspective on fatness, on dieting. They're looking – and they're looking they're looking right, you know, – there's nothing wrong with their perspective, it's just it's one perspective, right? If they look and they say it's a fluffy dog, it's probably a husky, it's playing, they're not wrong, you know? And so what we want to do with our clients is offer them the idea that there's a different perspective and so that means standing up from this angle, and going around to the other side of the dog. And from the other side of the dog we can see oh, it's playing and it's got brown eyes, and it's got white fluffy hair, and it's name is Jeremy or whatever, you know, because you've seen the tag. And so that's what we want to be doing is offering a different perspective and honouring that what they've seen so far – they're not wrong, it's totally normal to have those types of beliefs –



but let's take a few steps to see if we can get a different perspective of the dog - the dog, aka: fatphobia, diet, culture - you know, all that type of stuff.

So we're gonna have certain types of things that we're gonna say aha! 'cause we're gonna become detectives, right? We're gonna become detectives and there's gonna be things that people will say that lets us know that they need to unpack stuff from that suitcase. And these are the types of things people might say. Tell me in the comments if this sounds familiar, if clients have said these types of things to you. So, "I just felt better when I was thinner". "I was happier when I was smaller - my life was better". "I don't like the feeling of fatness on my body". We've got lots of "yep", "yep". "I identify as someone who works out, that's just what makes me happy". "It's not about looks, it's about health, and I just know I am not healthy when I'm at this weight". Yeah, yep, yep, yep, we got lots of yes, Christy says, not just from clients, but family and friends, these comments are everywhere. Yeah, all of them. Yeah, exactly. And finally, "I don't want to be trapped in this body".

So when someone says stuff like this to me if they're a client, - if they're not a client, I'm just like oh, eyeroll, boundary setting - if a client is saying this type of stuff I'm like uh huh, yes please! This is juicy. This is juicy because they're opening that suitcase, the suitcase of fat is bad, and so we can begin diving in and taking out the contents, and being like, oh, is it true that, you know, why did you feel better and happier when you were thinner? Was it because, you know, life was different and now you have a slightly bigger body, and you know these other factors are at play? Offering that different perspective.

And so how to explore the suitcase. First, we want to validate the belief. It makes total sense that you're feeling that. A lot of people do. And as we can see in the comments, a lot of people do, right? And so they're not alone and feeling like this. This is totally normal. Ask them questions. So things like: "Tell me more about that. What kind of emotions come up when you think about that?" "Is that belief helpful for you and is it going to help you reach your goals?" Next, offer a different perspective, or ask them what a different perspective would be. Sometimes they struggle with coming up with what a different perspective could be, because it's just so foreign to them, you know? And so maybe offering up a different idea of maybe you can be healthy at your current weight, if you do these things. Maybe health is



really a, you know, the concept is really sticky and it's really complicated and actually most of it is out of our control, etcetera, etcetera.

And don't try to force an opposite belief, because that's black and white thinking and black and white thinking is diet culture, it's white supremacy. It's where we want to get away from. So we want shades of grey, right? So an example is, a client might say: "I have no control over my body". The opposite is to say, "You have all control over your body", and the grey is to say, "We have a little bit of control, but not really". You know? So, offering that kind of shades of grey and those different perspectives. Okay, and finally, help them to gather evidence to support their new beliefs. Okay? So, gathering evidence is things like, who are you following on social media? Go and follow some new people. What podcasts are you listening to? What books are you reading? How much diet culture, fatphobia are you soaked in? And a big one as well is boundaries, to do with friends and family. Okay?

So currently they've got a lot of evidence that has been packed in that suitcase, and every day new evidence is being packed in that suitcase that fat is bad, so we want to counteract that as much as possible, and make sure that their life is as supportive as possible. And obviously it's not always possible to be like, "get rid of your family", "get rid of your friends", "never talk to them again", you know, that's not realistic. Yeah. So okay, has anyone had clients say to them, if you live in a straight sized body, "It's easy for you to say" - "It's easy for you to say". Sydney says: oh, yes, Jennifer says: all the time. Mhmm. Yeah. So one thing to recognize is that if you are in a normative body, clients will be drawn to you because of their own bias. They will see you if you have a straight sized body in your straight sized body, and because of their own fatphobia, they will want to work with you because of that versus a fat client. But then comes in the limitations of struggling to relate to you, if they, if the client has a fat body, struggling to relate to you because it's quote "easy for you to say". Okay? So understanding that because of bias, clients may be drawn to you, but then there may be limitations in the relationship where they can't learn from you anymore, which is difficult, right?

So I want to share a case study with Lauren Cadillac. So, Lauren Cadillac – you may know Lauren as @feelgooddietitian on the Instagrams. And so this is Lauren's profile. <https://www.instagram.com/feelgooddietitian/> Does anyone know Lauren? Is



anyone following Lauren? Vincci says, I love her reels! Yeah, she's so good on social media. I don't have the time for that, I mean I don't have I don't have the capacity in my brain to do that stuff. It's so interesting and cool when people do. So, Lauren, this is what she does with her clients. So she has one on one clients. So she works individually with clients, and she also has group coaching clients. And so she alternates between launching to bring in one on one clients and group coaching clients.

And so this is how Lauren and I work together. So about a year ago, Lauren approached me and said, hey, I want to bring in the fat perspective into my work. and so we came up with some ways to work together. So when she onboards a one-on-one client, she offers them, as part of their...they have 5 months with her, a call every other week, I think, over 5 months, and she will offer them 2, 50 minute calls with me that they can take during that 5 months to talk about body image stuff. And so we will encourage them to schedule those calls with me during the times that they're talking about the body image weeks. And so following the intuitive eating framework, and so when it comes to the you know, love and accept your body week, then clients will probably book calls with me. And so that...because I want to be transparent with pricing, so you know, I would charge \$125 per session, fifty-minute session for that.

Okay. Lauren also has pre-recorded training from me, and that is added to her one-on-one clients portal as well as the group client resources. Okay? So one on one clients and group coaching clients, both have pre-recorded trainings, and so here's a list of what the trainings are and each training costs \$700 that you can use forever in your paid coaching programs, or you can buy them all together and it's cheaper. And finally, in the group coaching sessions, we have a one hour Q&A. And so I will come in during the week, which is like, body image week, and we'll have a group coaching session, and so that costs 350 bucks.

Okay. So this is what Lauren says about the experience: "I think, for a lot of folks it's extremely validating to hear this message from someone who isn't a thin dietitian. Majority of us dietitians are thin, white cisgendered, able bodied, etcetera. The phrase "it's easy for you to say" comes to mind. We know the importance of representation in the media, and I would imagine some clients might find it



challenging to learn about body image, body acceptance/neutrality from someone that not only doesn't look like them, but doesn't have the same lived experience as them. It's easier to heal your relationship with food if you live in a body that society doesn't shame you for. I think you also act as a role model for a lot of my clients. You are someone they can aspire to be like. You show them that confidence, happiness, success etcetera, etcetera, isn't reserved for just one body type, like diet culture, has led us to believe. You bring more awareness around the deeper issues; problems of diet culture, showcasing the intersectionality between diet, culture, race, gender, sexuality, etcetera. Basically, I think you're absolutely fantastic and what you provide is invaluable."

Okay so, Lauren had this question a couple of days ago, and I was like, oh, this is beautiful. So Lauren last week was launching her program, and so she said to her audience: "Do you have any questions about this?" I wonder, in the chat, if you can tell me, would you know what to say if someone says, "how can you really understand what it's like to be fat, and how hard it is for us to stop dieting?" So tell me in the chat. Would you know what to say or what would you say? Most people say "I can't" Olivia and Sydney are both saying "I can't". Yeah. yeah. And so also, what would you say to show that you are offering resources? You know, at the moment can you say yes I'm offering resources?

So this is what Lauren said. So: "Exactly. I can't!" And then she goes on to say, you know, "I don't pretend to know. It's complete bullshit that the world treats people differently", and at the end here she says "But I can hold space, I can listen, I can try to understand, I can support, I can connect. I can provide you with various resources, like the fabulous, Fierce Fatty, who is a guest coach in my program, I can continue to fight, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, right?

So clients are gonna be asking these questions like, you know, "you don't get it", and it's important to show that, you know, I'm working on it, and here are resources of people who do have that lived experience.

Okay, so other ways to work with a consultant, a fat consultant, so different ideas for you. So, one-on-one coaching with clients, pre-recorded training, training your team. So, I often will go in and do training of, you know, a dietitian's team about this stuff.



Audit your online presence, 'cause honestly, our bias comes up and we don't even realise how, you know, there's certain things that you're like oh, that's probably not. meaning what I'm trying to say or saying what it is. Or I can do one on one sessions with you. And, you know, I'm not the only person who does this work. And so it's important to say as well, you know, there are people with different identities who will do a better job than me. So make sure that you're reaching out to the person who you think is best with this stuff.

Okay, so overview. How to support clients with body image concerns. So, refer to therapy and or a fat educator, and that includes providing resources on the fat community; books, people to follow, podcasts to listen to. And again, the limitations of therapy, it needs to be fat positive therapy. Next, help them unpack their suitcases, okay? Their beliefs. And so identify their beliefs and provide a different perspective and evidence, and that includes education on Health at Every Size, intuitive eating, fat liberation. And making sure that their brain is soaked in fat, positive goodness. And so that could be social media, friends and family, boundary setting. And finally offering the idea of valuing their body for what it does and not what it looks like. Finally, set goals and take small steps.

So this is a big cornerstone of my program called Fierce Fatty Academy, is the big cornerstone is changing their beliefs and setting a goal and taking steps towards that goal, because if we're not doing things...a lot of people fall into what I call constant learner mode. And so people will say I've read all the books, I've listened to all the podcasts, I follow everyone on social media and I still don't like my body. And it's because they're doing a lot of thinking, and not a lot of doing, and the act of of doing, but making sure that it's small steps not kind of jumping into the deep end, the act of doing is going to help them change those beliefs of what they know is possible for them. So that's really really important. And what I do is I set SMART goals, which, you know, the acronym SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound. Okay. So SMART goals. Identify what they are not doing due to how they perceive their body and what they would like to do; set goals with tiny steps to get there. And so a lot of people will say I don't know, you know, like, I'd like to wear a bikini, or whatever. And I'll say listen, we need to dial that back, because if right now, you've never worn a swimsuit going out and going to the beach and wearing a bikini is really, you know, a big jump. I won't say that's a stupid



idea. I'll just say okay, so what is the first thing that we can do? Is it, you know, wearing a swimsuit alone in your bedroom, with no one to see you for 2 minutes? Okay! Or, you know, does that seem like too much? Let's dial it back again. Maybe it's just browsing online for swimsuits, etcetera. Okay, small goals. We just mentioned that.

So! Everything that we've covered. Why fatphobia can erode our work with food, mistakes to avoid, and what to do instead, what determines body image; the 4 aspects of body image, how to support clients who are struggling with this, a case study, and we have now our 15 minutes of Q&A time.

So, Vincci, do we have a list of questions that you want me to go through? Ah we just nailed that timing!

Vincci: Yeah, I was about to say that too [laughs]

Vinny: I think that I've got an innate, like, internal clock, 'cause I didn't even look at the time. I'm like, my internal time – one of my skills, thank you, thank you.

Vincci: Alright, so we do have a few questions that are from the chat, and people can add more questions in the chat. If you're on Facebook, you can add questions on Facebook as well; I'm watching those, or if you want to on Zoom, put your hand up and ask it verbally, that's an option as well.

Alright, so the first question is, and I think you might have answered it, but the person didn't confirm, so I'll still ask it:

How do you recommend handling a situation where someone in a larger body reports physical struggles they perceive are due to the size and shape of their body. For example, back and knee pain, tying their shoes, crossing their legs, sitting on an airplane. This client is supportive of intuitive eating and HAES, but struggling with feeling good in their body without the thought that being in a smaller body would be easier for them.



Vinny: Yeah. Love this question. Like, and I come up against this very, very often. And it's so funny, just last night I had a group call with Bonnie and her group, and we had a comment come up; the same thing. And what I will say is: absolutely valid that that's how you're feeling; I can totally understand that. And what can you do right now to support your goals that you might have? And, looking at the reality of it. Okay, so yes, getting into an airplane seat is just harder. It is. There's no kind of getting away from that. There's no kind of like oh, well, you know... it just is! It's harder to live in a fat body in this world. And if you have, you know, people who have bigger bodies, super sized people and people with other marginalised identities, it's even harder! And so one, recognizing yes, yeah, it sucks. Yeah. And also I don't know how or what that's like for you, if you live in a thin body. Okay, so what can we do about it? Can we lose weight? No.

So, what's the alternative? What is the alternative? The alternative is to try and meet your goals with things that are evidence-based. And so, you know, if someone says, oh, you know, my back hurts, and it's because I'm fat, we all know that, you know...Is it? Or is it because, you know, you have an injury? Is it because...lots of different things are going on? And so, you know, can you go to physiotherapy, can you do this? Can you rally against, you know, fatphobia, and externalise that shame versus internalising that shame?

So recognizing that it makes sense that they feel like that. And, what's the alternative? We can't lose weight. So what do we do instead? We will support our bodies where they are at right now. So does that make sense?

Vincci: Mhmm, yeah, All right.

Vinny: Good. Queue.

Vincci: Alright, next question came up when you were talking about exploring the suitcase. So Crystal says:

Sometimes people say that feeling that way, like, I guess, feeling negative about their bodies, or feeling that fat is bad is to motivate them to reach their goal of



weight loss, so when I say "would this help you reach your goal", they're likely to say "yes". What should I focus on in that situation?

Vinny: Yeah, I would want to explore like, okay, so what is it about weight loss that makes that your goal? Is that an achievable goal? What we know, the science shows us that it's not. But also it's okay that you have that goal, because why wouldn't you have that goal when we live in such a violently fatphobic society? And so I would just ask more questions and get, you know, why? Why, why, why? And then offer that different perspective. And honour, you know, exactly how they're feeling, because how they're feeling is normal and right and they're not wrong to feel like that. So I would just get curious and hope that that slight change in perspective that you're offering will begin to stick so that at maybe the next session they'll be like I've realised that, you know, having a goal of weight loss is not going to work, because, you know, I read this book or blah blah blah, whatever.

Vincci: Crystal has an add-on and says:

They often refer to their previous experiences in weight loss, and then say "yes, it's achievable. And so they kind of get stuck in that space.

Vinny: Yeah and so I'd say okay, so if it's achievable, then why are you not currently the weight that you want to be, if it's achievable. And they'll be like oh, because you know, I didn't stick to it. And that's really important. Then we can start offering the evidence and say, listen, you know, studies have shown, for so many years, that it's not, you know, possible, it's just not possible. And so we really need to give them the evidence and say, it's not your fault. What we've learned is that diets do work, short-term, which has been your experience, client, but if they worked long-term, then everyone would be thin. And, you know, that's not true for the world.

Vincci: Perfect. Thank you. Sorry, I'm just typing an instruction. And okay, so next question comes from Jennifer, and I have to find it in the chat. So she says:

I have a lot of complex clients who also struggle with mobility, illness, ageing, etcetera, and so it is difficult for them to focus on what their body can do rather than what it looks like. Any suggestions?



Vinny: Yeah. So that's when it's really important to honour the idea that some people are really, really angry at their bodies. And rightfully so, because their bodies have let them down in many different ways, and so offering the idea of "just appreciate your body for what it does" is so like, not it, right? And so when I say that we have to take it with a pinch of salt, of, you know, what is going on with your body? Do you have chronic illness? Are you disabled? Do you have mobility issues? And in that instance what I will say is I want you to lean into being annoyed with your body. I want you to really feel that anger and frustration and sadness that your body has let you down. And so it's kind of like the same with what we learn about intuitive eating, you know, allowing all foods, allowing all emotions, and not trying to get them to, you know, glaze over and say "this is so positive, this is so great" and just allow them to...what I say is, write a fuck you letter to your body. So write a letter saying like fuck you for for not letting me walk up the stairs, and, you know, thanks for ruining my life, and blah blah blah. And in that process, clients will come back and they'll say I started writing it, and I was really really angry, and then I started feeling compassion for myself; I started feeling compassion for my body. Just by allowing that, you know, disappointment and sadness and anger, is really helpful. And not all clients will come back and say oh, yeah, now I feel great, you know, 'cause it's a process. But a lot of people do realise, actually, you know, my body has done a lot. So yeah, lean into the hate, lean into the hate, is what I say.

Vincci: Mhmm, yeah, like addressing that part that's hurting or yeah, yeah, struggling is sometimes so helpful, because I think sometimes we're so desperate to push it away or fix it.

Vinny: Yeah, and it's actually like, really oh, that things like that, like emotions like that, I'm always like, getting my detective, you know, magnifying glass, and being like oh, tell me more about it. Like because, you know, it tells us something about, you know the pain that they're feeling, emotionally, and I just want to get more curious about it and see what can we do to support them where they're at right now.

Vincci: Yeah, Daphne asks:



Can you give an example of a smart goal to help people change their beliefs about their bodies or about fatness?

Vinny: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So, what I'll often do is ask them the things that they are not doing and doing that they currently want to do, and get them to write out a list of all the different things and say you don't have to do any of these things on the list, but just giving you, you know...let your brain start thinking. And then getting them to pick something from that list and then dial it back. Now examples of goals. A lot of people have goals around movement, around wearing things, and around boundaries. They're the big things; movement, wearing something, and boundaries. And so say, if they're like oh, you know, my body's awful and unattractive, I can't wear a crop top, but they actually really want to wear a crop top, the act of exposing themselves, to going outside wearing a crop top, even if it's just for 20 seconds to get the mail, is going to help their brain understand that actually they do have a body that is allowed to wear a crop, top because, you know, the paparazzi weren't outside taking pictures being like oh, my God! Look at this fat person wearing a crop top, you know, tell the world that is disgusting! And so that will help them change their beliefs, especially when it's around boundaries with family and friends; that will help them with recognizing that it's not okay to talk about that type of stuff. And then they won't be surrounded by those beliefs that, you know, like, their brain is getting bombarded with.

Vincci: Mhmm, perfect. Thank you. Okay, Jen asks:

How do you suggest thin providers best address the weight discrepancy with fat clients, so that it comes across as empathetic and seeking understanding rather than confrontational?

Vinny: Expand more on that. What do you mean, the weight discrepancy? Is she there? Do you want to unmute?

Vincci: Let's see. The discrepancy between...the provider, and-

Jen: Sorry I'm here. Can you hear me?

Vinny: Yeah, yeah.



Jen: Yeah, So I guess what I'm saying is like, if I'm a thin provider and there's the fat client in the room, like, literally kind of that elephant in the room between us like they're thinking oh, you're thin, that's what I want, so how do I bring up that discrepancy between us and that they're maybe having expectations based on my weight, and without it seeming that I'm judging their body, I suppose is what I'm trying to say.

Vinny: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So that's where we want to make sure that before they have interactions with us, they know that we are a fat positive provider. They might not see that, but just laying the groundwork to make sure that our website, that we talk about that, our social media..and then just get asking them questions right? You don't want to be like oh, hey...hey client, I notice that you're fat, I'm thin and you want to be thin like me because I'm gorgeous, but you know [laughs], they'll be like, excuse me? I'm not suggesting that anyone would do that. But just saying kind of like what are your expectations of what do you want to see from that, and talking about okay, so by the way, you know, these are my values i'm anti-racist. I'm fat positive, and blah blah blah. And so, you know, this is how I can help you meet your goals, or whatever. And so just having it as part of your common language, and having it just as a part of your business, as part of your ethical statement that you are a fat positive person, and then getting curious about what they want to do, where they want to be, and how you can support them in that. Does that make sense?

Jen: Yeah, Yeah, it does. Thank you.

Vinny: Yeah. Cool. Cool, cool, cool! So we've got a couple of minutes for maybe a quick and dirty question.

Vincci: Okay, I don't know if this is a quick and dirty one, but 2 people asked it,

Vinny: Okay.

Vincci: So it's a good one:



So how do we bring in conversations about racism and all of the other intersections, if that doesn't naturally come up? You mentioned this being a very important first step, and I'm not just not sure how to start this conversation.

So that was from Olivia. And then Sydney adds:

As a thin white person, I struggled to discuss racism and diet culture with BIPOC folks. It feels like I am teaching them about their own experience.

Vinny: Mmm, yeah, yeah, yeah. And obviously. I'm a white person, and so I am unable to say oh, this is how you need to talk to BIPOC folks. But what I would do in regards to talking about fatness and educating more is I would probably come in and have, like a sheet of resources, or something that you email to them and say hey, here are some kind of key facts about the work that we're doing; if you have the capacity and you want to, go and read this book, listen to this podcast, blah blah blah. And so that you're not doing the education, but you're right there and then, you're opening the conversation for them to learn more without you teaching them. You're referring to a fat educator a Black educator, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And then they, you know, see if they are interested in bringing it up in session. And also you know the way that that I've been speaking about, you know me saying like white supremacy or or transphobia and things like that? I will just bring it up and just say, you know, anti-fatness is anti-Blackness, and it's not a big deal, it's just us having a conversation you know? If that makes sense. So yeah.

Olivia: Yes, that's very helpful, thank you good in a voice.

Vinny: Oh, good! A little voice! [laughs] Yes, Sydney says, thank you so much I have to run, but this was amazing. Thank you, Sydney. Thank you. Thank you, everyone, for having me and for those incredible questions.

Vincci: Mhmm. Well, thank you, Vinnie like this was such a great presentation. Like, I think there were a few comments there that this was like, the best, if not one of the best presentations that they've ever attended

Vinny: Stop it! Oh my God.



Vincci: You did such a good job, I think, combining, you know, kind of the theory with practical application, and in such a dynamic way. So thank you so much, Vinny, for your time and expertise for yeah, and all of this.

Vinny: Thank you. And thank you for having me! Thank you, thank you, everyone, for being so engaging and asking such great questions. I loved it, and if you want to hear more from me, then just follow me on Instagram, where I will post pictures of my dog.

Vincci: Yeah. It's @fierce.fatty, right? <https://www.instagram.com/fierce.fatty/>

Vinny: That's it! Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Vincci: Perfect. Well, thank you so much, and I'll be emailing out the recording to everyone, and the recording will actually be automatically put on Facebook and, you know, we'll share the slides and stuff like that. So. yeah, thanks so much, everyone, for attending. Thanks again. Vinny, for this wonderful presentation, and I'm sure we'll all stay in touch.

Vinny: Thank you, everybody. See ya later!

Vincci: Yeah, have a good rest of your day, everyone!

